



REPORT

**GENDER EQUALITY CAPACITY ASSESSMENT
OF EMERGING FEMINIST ACTORS
IN AZERBAIJAN**

**WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN UNION PROJECT
“Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility – Regional Actions”**

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List of Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SDG 5	Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender equality
UN	United Nations

Executive Summary

The Gender Equality Capacity Assessment of Emerging Feminist Actors in Azerbaijan was developed to assess the gender capacity of feminist actors (e.g., activists who identify as feminists and work on GEWE either individually, in a group, or with an organization) in Azerbaijan and to craft strategies to strengthen their potential for the advancement of the SDG 5 GEWE targets in the country. The assessment covers the following:

1. A review of the legal and regulatory framework for women's rights and gender equality in Azerbaijan;
2. An overview of the emerging feminist actors in Azerbaijan based on data from an online Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Questionnaire and individual semi-structured interviews;
3. An assessment of the knowledge, understanding, and skills the feminist actors have on GEWE and on the groups'/organizations' gender architecture and gender policy;
4. Recommendations on ways to improve the gender equality capacity of the feminist actors in Azerbaijan.

Legal and regulatory frameworks: The Constitution of Azerbaijan (1995) prohibits discrimination based on sex and states that the rights of husband and wife are equal. In 2006, the country passed the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men that set the legal foundation for gender equality in the nation. Azerbaijan ratified the UN's CEDAW (1995) and the CEDAW Optional Protocol (2001) as well as the European Convention on Human Rights (2002). The Criminal Code (2000) (Article 154) and the Labour Code Azerbaijan (1999) also prohibit any discrimination, including gender-based discrimination.¹ Led by the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs, Azerbaijan's government has demonstrated efforts to establish a more gender-sensitive mechanism to address gender-related challenges. However, there is a need for better articulation of the government's gender policy and rigorous implementation of gender-related action plans via meaningful engagement with civil society actors.

Feminist actors: Since 2016, a new generation of feminist actors has emerged in the civil society landscape of Azerbaijan. These actors primarily use social media to communicate the essence of feminism, discuss gender issues openly, promote GEWE, and denounce harmful cultural practices that impede the advancement of gender equality in the country. Their passion, boldness, creativity, and wide outreach in gender equality advocacy is unmatched when compared to previous grassroots initiatives. This Assessment employed quantitative and qualitative research methods to gather and analyse the data on the capacities and needs of these feminist actors.

¹ Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 2000. <http://www.e-qanun.az/code/11>

Methodology: The methods included a desk review of relevant resources, an online Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Questionnaire adopted from [the UN Women Capacity Assessment Tool](#), and individual semi-structured interviews. A total of 31 individuals completed the online Questionnaire and 22 individuals participated in a semi-structured interview.

Assessment results: Data from the Questionnaire and the interviews showed that emerging feminist actors unite in small groups (4-15 persons per group) and work on small scale GEWE projects and social initiatives (via platforms such as Femiskop, Fem-utopia, Equals, Gender Talks, Gender Hub) without having a formal organizational structure or official registration as a legal entity. Of the 22 interviewees, only two were employed by an officially registered CSO. Some of the interviewees pointed to the burdensome registration requirements as a reason they had not applied for registration, while other interviewees noted that it was their group's/organization's strategy to not operate within a rigid organizational structure.

Most of the interviewees reported limited financial resources as a barrier for the GEWE agenda and noted grant projects funded by embassies and international organizations are small and short-term. The Government's cumbersome registration procedure for foreign grants, donations, and service contracts is reportedly one of the main constraints that hinders access to funding for CSOs. Also, alternative funding mechanisms such as "cash boxes" or "crowdfunding" are not envisaged in the legislation and the criteria for "charitable organizations" has not been clearly defined in the legislation.

When asked if "feminist activists and women's rights groups/organizations are well organized in Azerbaijan," 18 of the 22 interviewees responded negatively, acknowledging that the actors in the country are not well organized in general. The actors do not have a shared agenda, a statement of common goals and objectives, or a platform for dialogue. Interview data revealed the participants joined efforts with other emerging feminist actors to implement short-term activities on specific topics (i.e., violence against women, early marriages, an International Women's Day march). The challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic social-distancing measures have further narrowed the space for engagement with different GEWE stakeholders. Interviewees also highlighted the need for meaningful dialogue and cooperation between the Government and CSOs on GEWE, since neither can achieve GEWE without the support of the other.

About half of the interviewees indicated their group/organization did not possess a clearly defined mission statement or strategy and it lacks organizational capacities critical for resource mobilization, design, and implementation of large scale GEWE projects. The groups/organizations receiving limited donor funding had some sort of basic statement of goals, vision and mission, organizational structure, activity plan, branding/logo, and communication plan. However, they lacked detailed financial accounting systems and procedures, formal travel and procurement rules, formal position descriptions, and performance management systems.

Data from the Questionnaire showed a little more than half (55%) of the 31 respondents had taken gender-related training or courses within the past two years. Only 37% of the respondents reported they received support (i.e., mentorship, coaching, detailed assignment) from their organization/group on gender issues, whereas 40% of them reported they had not received such support. Almost all respondents were familiar with the international GEWE conventions, with 65% reporting they were quite familiar with conventions, 29% reporting they were very familiar with them, and 3% reporting they used these conventions in their everyday work. All 22 of the interview participants acknowledged the need for increasing their knowledge of key feminist concepts, theories, strategies, discourse, and best practices, in addition to lessons learned from other countries' movements promoting feminism and GEWE. The main thematic areas of interest for further education frequently mentioned were as follows: gender budgeting tools, gender mainstreaming, sex-disaggregated data collection, GBV, media-monitoring, equal opportunities in education, equal participation in the socio-economic and political life and governance of the state, prevention and effective investigation of GBV cases, prosecution of perpetrators, protection of victims of violence, gender-responsive pay/benefits policy and practices, the introduction of parental leave, LGBTQI rights, combatting employment discrimination, SDG 5, and international conventions on GEWE.

Interview participants also identified the following skills as the most demanded skills to focus on in potential capacity development interventions: effective communication, storytelling, effective and quality feminist content creation, podcast production, skills for effective presentation/sharing of information, use of new technologies and social media tools, survey design, data collection, processing, and visualization, outreach and communication strategy. and effective advocacy and policy reform strategies. Data from the online Questionnaire revealed the following five main areas where respondents had no or little information about: gender auditing, mainstreaming gender into finance/procurement/IT/Human Resources policies and other directives, gender-sensitive budgeting, integrating gender into strategic planning processes, and gender analysis for strategic planning. While the participants recognized the need for training and capacity building on gender communication, they also suggested that journalists, editors, and producers in the country be trained to identify and avoid gender-biased and sexist statements, and how to raise awareness about GEWE.

Recommendations: The report offers both general and specific recommendations to address needs and gender capacity gaps of the emerging feminist actors and other key players (i.e., journalists, educators, local and national authorities) in Azerbaijan and proposes actions for multi-stakeholder cooperation and mobilization of efforts of all state and non-state GEWE actors. The two general recommendations focus on addressing gender-based discrimination, protecting women, and strengthening civic and political space for dialogue and joint action on GEWE. The six specific recommendations suggest actions for: strengthening organizational/institutional capacity of the feminist actors, ensuring the financial viability of these groups/organizations, development of technical knowledge and skills, strengthening formal education and academic research on GEWE, mobilization of the feminist actors, and building capacities for advanced use technologies and online platforms for development and distribution of quality GEWE content.

Introduction

This Gender Equality Capacity Assessment of Emerging Feminist Actors in Azerbaijan was commissioned at the request of the EUD in Azerbaijan under the EU funded project “*Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility – Regional Actions*”. For this Assessment, the term “actors” refers to activists who identify as feminists and work on GEWE either individually, in a group, or with an organization. The Assessment aimed to explore the gender capacity of these actors and to develop strategies to strengthen their potential for the advancement of the SDG5 GEWE targets in Azerbaijan.

The Objectives of the Assessment are as follows:

- To assess the emerging feminist actors’ understanding and knowledge of and skills in promoting GEWE, and (as applicable) the group’s/organization’s gender architecture and gender policy;
- To investigate how the CSO landscape in Azerbaijan is changing with the presence of these emerging feminist actors and how COVID-19 has affected their means of communication and mobilization;
- To develop recommendations on how to advance the gender knowledge and skills of these emerging feminist actors for the full realization of SDG 5 in Azerbaijan.

The Assessment team consisted of Ms. Khalisa Shahverdiyeva (Lead Consultant), Ms. Aynur Yusifova, and Ms. Shamsiyya Mustafayeva. They all have an extensive background in GEWE. They wish to express their gratitude to all persons and institutions involved in the Assessment for their time, for participating in the Questionnaire and interviews, and for their openness and cooperation.

Methodology

The Assessment employed quantitative and qualitative research methods to gather and analyse data on the capacities and needs of the participants in this study. The methods included a desk review of relevant resources, an online Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Questionnaire, and individual semi-structured interviews. The relevant resources reviewed during the desk review were publicly available documents that were in Azerbaijani or English. The online Questionnaire and the individual interview questions were designed and presented in Azerbaijani to alleviate any language barriers for participants, but the English versions are included in this report.

The desk review involved an examination of Azerbaijan’s national laws and by-laws, the global² and nationalized³ SDG 5 targets and indicators, and other relevant international normative documents, including EU strategy papers and action plans on gender equality and human rights. A total of 24 documents (see Appendix 1) with publication dates ranging from 1995-2020 were reviewed and analysed. The purpose of the desk review was to provide a brief overview of the local legal and regulatory context that impact the operation of the emerging feminist actors in Azerbaijan, and to identify a framework that would assist the Assessment team in developing recommendations on actions to be taken to address local needs in alignment with the SDG 5 and EU strategy and action plans on human rights and gender equality.

The UN Women’s Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Tool was used as a guide for developing this Assessment’s methodology in general and the online Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Questionnaire in particular. The Tool assesses the knowledge, understanding, and skills that a given organization and individuals have on GEWE, and the organization’s gender architecture and gender policy. The results can be used to shape the capacity development strategy or action plan of the organization and/or individuals. Hence 16 of the 17 questions in the online Questionnaire used in this study were adopted from the UN Women’s Tool. The online Questionnaire (See Appendix 2 for the English version) was created and administered through SurveyMonkey.

A list of 41 potential participants (e.g., individual actors and actors who identified as a member of a local group or organization) was created based on the Assessment team’s knowledge of these emerging feminist actors, the Assessment team’s professional contacts, recommendations provided by other gender experts, and recommendations provided by interview participants. The Assessment team sent an individual email (in Azerbaijani) to all of the potential participants to explain the purpose of the Assessment, the organization providing funding support for the project, and the right of participants to withdraw from the study at any time. The email also informed them that their participation in the study was voluntary and that their data would be handled confidentially and not be made public without their consent.⁴ Finally, the email invited them to participate in the study by completing the online Questionnaire and consenting to be interviewed.⁵

² United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020. Retrieved from — [SDG Indicators \(un.org\)](#) on October 18, 2020

³ State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2020). Available national statistics on the Sustainable Development Goals indicators. Retrieved from [Home page - DİM - Dayanıqlı İnkişaf üzrə Milli Məlumatlandırma Portalı \(azstat.org\)](#) on October 19, 2020

⁴ Additionally, the email assured them that their individual responses to the online Questionnaire and interview questions would remain anonymous and would only be used as aggregated data for the analysis of the results.

⁵ Some of the interview responses have been used in this report to share illustrative remarks, but the responses do not reveal the personal identity of the respective participant.

A total of 31 individuals completed the online Questionnaire. Twenty-seven of the respondents identified themselves as Female, two identified themselves as Male, and two identified themselves as Gender-queer. The group ranged in age from 16-45 years old and the mean age was 30 years old. 55% reported having a Masters degree as their highest attained educational degree and 23% reported as having a Bachelors/undergraduate degree, while 16% reported having completed secondary school and 6 % reported having completed an “Other” educational level. No one reported holding a Ph.D. degree. Slightly over one-third of the respondents (37%) reported that gender issues are the whole focus of their professional activities and 23% reported that gender issues are mostly reflected in their professional activities. In contrast, one-third of the respondents (33%) reported that gender issues are not significantly reflected in their professional activities and 7% reported that gender issues are not applicable to their professional activities.

Twenty of the 31 individuals who completed the online Questionnaire were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview because of their relatively high level of engagement with the GEWE agenda. Two of the original 41 potential participants did not complete the online Questionnaire, but they were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview because they were well-known activists in Azerbaijan. In total, 22 individuals agreed to and participated in an individual interview. Nineteen of the interviewees identified themselves as Female, one identified as Male, and two identified themselves as Gender-queer. The individual interviews were conducted by the Assessment team in Azerbaijani and each interviewee participated in one interview session. The interviews ranged in length from 40-100 minutes and covered 12 questions (See Appendix 3 for the English translation of the interview questions). The average length of the individual interviews was 70 minutes. Five interviews were held face-to-face and 17 were held via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions. The interviews were transcribed manually, transferred to a Word document, and then were analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings of the desk review, the online Questionnaire (31 responses), and the individual interviews (22 interviews) serve as the foundation for recommendations and conclusions in this report.

Findings of the Assessment

The legal and regulatory framework for the protection of women's rights and the promotion of gender equality in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan ratified the UN's CEDAW on June 30, 1995 and the CEDAW Optional Protocol on June 1, 2001⁶. The country is a member of the Council of Europe and a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) on January 25, 2001, and ratified the Convention on April 15, 2002.⁷

The Constitution of Azerbaijan (1995) guarantees full gender equality between men and women and prohibits discrimination based on sex (Article 25), provides the equal status of men and women within marriage (Article 34), and reflects the requirements of all international treaties (Article 12)⁸. The Criminal Code of Azerbaijan (2000) (Article 154) also prohibits any discrimination, including gender-based discrimination.⁹ The Labour Code of Azerbaijan (1999) sets the provisions which prohibit discrimination in career development (i.e., recruitment, job promotion, vocational training, retraining, and skills development)¹⁰. The Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men of Azerbaijan (2006)¹¹ defines concepts and terms related to gender equality and sexual harassment and ensures equal opportunities for women in the enjoyment of all rights, including political, economic, social, and cultural rights. The Law also provides equal pay for equal work between men and women and prohibits discriminatory hiring practices.

The defining legal document on domestic violence is the Law of Azerbaijan on the Prevention of Domestic Violence¹², which was adopted in 2010. The Law regulates measures aimed at the prevention of violence, including legal measures, such as the criminal prosecution of cases, accountability for perpetrators and the executions of court decisions, and social measures, including the provision of shelter, legal, and medical assistance for victims, as well as continuing

⁶ <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/AdvanceVersions/CEDAW-C-AZE-4.pdf>

⁷ Council of Europe. Chart of signatures and ratifications of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/005/signatures?p_auth=s9uNDfa4.

⁸ The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan (with amendments). 1995. http://ask.org.az/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Konstitusiya_ENG.pdf

⁹ Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 2000. <http://www.e-qanun.az/code/11>

¹⁰ Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 1999. <http://www.e-qanun.az/code/7>

¹¹ Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men of the Republic of Azerbaijan. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_127414.pdf

¹² Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (2010). <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/20131>. <https://president.az/articles/47971>

education and assistance in finding employment. Azerbaijan has not ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2011), which is also referred to as the "Istanbul Convention."¹³ The Istanbul Convention is widely recognised as the most far-reaching legal instrument to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence as a violation of human rights. By accepting the Convention, governments are obliged to change their laws, introduce practical measures, and allocate resources to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to violence against women and domestic violence. However, Azerbaijan has taken two actions to support the implementation of the Law of Azerbaijan on Prevention of Domestic Violence (2010), which will be described in the next paragraph.

First, the Cabinet of Ministers in Azerbaijan issued the following regulations: rules on the operations of support centers for victims of domestic violence and rules for accreditation of non-state support centers for victims of domestic violence (2012); rules for handling referrals of cases of domestic violence where the acts are not regarded as of a criminal nature (2012); rules for the organization and operationalization of a database on domestic violence (2011); and rules guiding the organization of the prophylactic registry of the persons committing domestic violence and correctional-preventive work with them (2011). Second, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, signed an Order (2020) approving the National Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence in Azerbaijan for 2020-2023¹⁴. The implementation of the National Action Plan establishes solid ground for a national referral mechanism for the prevention of GBV and domestic violence and response through multi-sectoral partnership and coordination efforts. According to the Order, the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs of Azerbaijan will coordinate the activities envisaged by the National Action Plan and will report on the implementation of activities envisaged in the Plan to the President of Azerbaijan once a year.

The State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs of Azerbaijan (established in 1998) is a government entity responsible for formulating and pursuing State policy on all aspects of women's rights and empowerment, along with the implementation of CEDAW. According to a Charter of the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs of Azerbaijan approved by the Decree of the President of Azerbaijan in 2006, the Committee is a central executive power body that implements and regulates the State policy on family, women, and children's issues.

¹³ Chart of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. 2011. https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures?p_auth=IZAC86eah

¹⁴ Presidential Order approving the National Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence in Azerbaijan for 2020-2023. 2020. <https://president.az/articles/47971>

About the emerging feminist actors in Azerbaijan

Since 2016, a new generation of feminist actors has emerged in the civil society landscape of Azerbaijan. As Y. Aliyeva reported in 2020, “Azerbaijan’s virtual and public spaces have experienced an unprecedented boost in feminist rhetoric over recent years. Activists, represented mainly by millennials and Generation Z, are using social media to spread the word about the true essence of feminism, discuss gender issues, and promote call-out culture by exposing injustices.”¹⁵ The emerging feminist actors in this study are a part of this generation, and the majority of them have united in small groups (4-15 persons per group) and they mainly work on GEWE small projects or social initiatives (via online social learning platforms such as Femiskop, Fem-utopia, Equals, Gender Talks, Gender Hub) without having a formal organizational structure or official registration as a legal entity.

The individual interviews made it clear that the emerging feminist actors have strong dedication and passion for promoting and defending GEWE. These actors also demonstrate a much bolder approach to advocacy in comparison to the previous generation of women’s rights activists. For example, some of the individual actors had attempted to hold a march in the city centre of Baku to mark International Women’s Day, which is March 8th. The city of Baku denied their request to hold it in the city centre, but stated they could hold it in Lokbatan Township (which is on the outskirts of Baku). The organizers of the march rejected the offer and insisted they hold it in the city centre. The march occurred on March 10, 2020 and 55 individuals participated in it. The marchers carried posters that had slogans in Azerbaijani but translate into English as: “Do not kill us, let us live”; “Stop murdering women.”; “Do people at home know you have rights?”; “Fight like a girl!”; “Daughter is mine, I can give it to anyone vs Vagina is mine, I can give it to anyone.” Police officers made several attempts to disperse the march, which included using violence against the marchers and injured several of them. Mainstream media and social media in Azerbaijan referred to the marchers as “daring,” “provocative,” “shocking,” and “culturally inappropriate.”

Local Context and Operational Challenges

Mobilization of the emerging feminist actors

The majority of the emerging feminist actors in this study reported they know or know of other feminist activists, groups, and/or organizations working on GEWE in the country, but noted they do not have a shared agenda, a statement of common goals and objectives, or a platform for dialogue among civil society members, feminist activists, groups, and organizations. In response

¹⁵ The Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) (2020). Retrieved from About Us | Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) (zois-berlin.de) on 10 December, 2020

to a question on whether “feminist activists and women’s rights groups/organizations are well organized in Azerbaijan”, 18 of the 22 interviewees responded negatively, acknowledging that the actors in the country are not well organized in general. As described by one of the interviewees: “For better organization, feminists need to identify shared goals, objectives, strategic plans. Short and long-term targets need to be identified. We get together before protest activities, divide roles and functions...even when there are events and roundtable discussions. But none of these has been sustainable.”

Data from the Questionnaire and the individual interviews also confirmed the emerging feminist actors are poorly organized and they lack institutional capacities to implement large scale projects that are impactful and sustainable. Instead, data revealed the actors have selectively joined efforts with other emerging actors in country to implement short-term activities on specific topics (i.e., violence against women, early marriages, the International Women’s Day march). Two of the 22 interviewees even claimed that the current “natural” level of organization and coordination among the emerging feminist actors in the country is satisfactory and that there was no need for becoming more organized, joining efforts, or being more coordinated. They argued that joining efforts was either impossible or unnecessary given the differences in the actors’ goals, objectives, work methods, and levels of experiences. As one participant shared: “I do not imagine how we can join efforts. How? We have different approaches, different visions... perhaps it would be useful to join advocacy efforts on selected issues, for example, on the Istanbul Convention, but gender equality efforts should not be limited to only fighting against domestic violence, of course.”

About half of the interviewees who were associated with a GEWE group indicated their group did not even possess a clearly defined mission, vision statement, or a written strategy document or action plan. In addition, the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic social-distancing measures have further narrowed the limited space for multi-stakeholder discussions and exchange of ideas on gender equality. “There is no space for women to gather, share their stories, network, and support each other” said one of the interviewees.

Some of the interviewees highlighted that differences among the feminist activists, groups, and organizations in the country discourage close contact and cooperation among them. The differences they identified were differences in their goals and objectives, priorities, preferred strategies and work methods that stem from generational gaps, interpersonal relations, and fear of competition. When asked about possible incentives that would help the emerging feminist actors use a coherent approach and joint efforts, some interviewees answered that, perhaps, if someone reputable would take up a leadership role, they could join efforts around that trusted person. One interviewee explained, “If we had strong, trusted leadership, we would then get engaged. I think the lack of trust and leadership is an issue. I think we need to build trust, first.” At the same time, some of the interviewees were somewhat sceptical about the value and feasibility of the feminist activists, groups, and organizations in country joining efforts and employing a coherent approach.

One interviewee stated, “Unlike the established women’s rights organizations, we are not well organized but we are sincerer and are genuine feminists.” Like their counterparts, these interviewees also argued there are significant differences between the feminist activists, groups, and organizations in the country; however, the differences they identified were differences in terms of their goals and priorities, understanding of feminism, motivations, work methods, level of knowledge and skills, and generational gap. These differences reportedly make it very difficult, if not impossible, to unite efforts. The quotes below offer some insight into interviewee attitudes about differences and how these impact joint approaches and mobilization:

“They look at her group as radicals but I consider them real feminists. Others just try to fit the agenda. There is a generational gap as well. Young feminists want quick changes.”

“There are disputes among feminists in Azerbaijan. There are different approaches to the same issue...Coordination should occur naturally, not artificially. There is no need to join efforts. Communication is normal...the majority of feminists and women rights groups know or know of each other.”

Some of the interviewees were even sceptical about the value of establishing a common platform for dialogue, coordination, and cooperation of different civic and public actors. Interviewees also noted that international, inter-governmental organizations (through using their leverage and/or incentives) could play a special role in bringing the government of Azerbaijan and women’s rights activists together around implementation of the nationalized SDG 5 targets.

Structural issues and operational environment

There are a number of structural, socio-economic, educational factors that have restricted the operational space for independent civic actors (e.g., CSOs) in Azerbaijan. Since 2014, the CSO operating environment has become more restrictive in the country, including registration, funding, and reporting requirements, in addition to harsh penalties for their violation. Further to restrictive amendments to the laws governing national and international CSOs implemented by the authorities in 2013-2014, new complex rules were enacted in 2015. These rules require CSOs to register domestic and foreign grants with Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Justice and they require foreign donors to gain overall authorization from the Ministry of Justice and to receive approval for each grant from the Ministry of Finance. Given this constrained operational environment, alongside a decline in access to funding (particularly from foreign sources), many CSOs have had to suspend, scale down, or move their operations abroad.

While the Constitution of Azerbaijan provides for a broad range of human rights and freedoms, it was widely noted by interview participants that implementation of relevant laws is far from perfect. For example, despite the existence of the quite progressive Law on Public Participation (Article 24), the participation of CSOs in the decision-making process including the adoption of new laws and policies is limited. As one interviewee shared “There is no safe and free space for women to

fully enjoy their freedom of association and assembly”, while another stated “There are some good laws but the implementation is not ensured. Financial resources are not allocated to support changes.” Interviewees also reported they had faced several bureaucratic hurdles while trying to organize public events and implement civic initiatives in Baku as well as in the regions of the country. Several interviewees noted that without support from the relevant state authorities or involvement of partner international organizations or embassies, it is difficult to organize and conduct activities on human rights issues in Azerbaijan.

Of the 22 interviewees, only two were employed by an officially registered CSO that works on GEWE in Azerbaijan. Some of the interviewees pointed to the burdensome registration requirements as a reason that the group/organization they were associated with had not applied for registration, while other interviewees noted that it was their group’s/organization’s strategy to not operate within a rigid organizational structure and to keep the feminist movement fluid, flexible, and dynamic. One interviewee further explained that “having an officially registered NGO is a luxury that not many can afford.”

Some interviewees also mentioned Azerbaijan’s non-accession to the Istanbul Convention was one of the legal environmental challenges that impede their activities aimed at effectively addressing GBV against women in the country. Many interviewees stated the governance system in the country is male-dominated and not particularly or genuinely interested in reforms aiming to increase GEWE. In addition, interviewees noted patriarchal attitudes and conservative views strongly prevail in the society, despite some visible indications of women’s emancipation and some increased representation in the governance and socio-economic life of the country.

Interviewees highlighted there is no platform for dialogue and cooperation between Azerbaijan’s government and CSOs on GEWE. For example, communication between the Government and CSOs about the formulation and implementation of the recently adopted (November 27, 2020) National Action Plan on Combating Domestic Violence has been limited and sporadic. Some interviewees believed the Government downplays the depth and scale of gender equality and GBV issues and focuses on what is written in relevant legislation. One interviewee explained, “Sometimes government authorities do not acknowledge the existence of any issues with ensuring gender equality. They refer to legislative acts and claim having already achieved gender equality in the country”.

A number of interviewees mentioned that if feminists, women rights activists, and the relevant state authorities could agree on shared fundamental goals and objectives and involve reputable and distinguished experts in their discussions, this would facilitate dialogue and joining efforts around the shared goals. Some of the interviewees also highlighted the importance of ensuring the transparency and integrity of those leading and facilitating that process. Reportedly, a new round of elections is going to be held soon to renew the composition of the Public Council, a CSO

consultation platform within the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Issues. The new Public Council will include 11 civil society representatives, which is significantly higher than the current number of five representatives. Attempts are also being made to better organize and coordinate feminists through the Gender Hub Initiative, which was launched in July 2020.

Financial resources

Most of the interviewees reported the financial resources available to them to implement GEWE activities are very limited and that grant projects funded by embassies and international organizations are small and short-term. These issues are tied to the lengthy and troublesome CSO registration process required by the government of Azerbaijan as well as restrictions on foreign funding of CSOs. The main funding sources for CSOs in the country are grants, service contracts, donations, and membership fees. However, the government's additional complicated registration procedure for foreign grants, donations, and service contracts is one of the main constraints that hinders access to foreign funding for CSOs. Besides, Azerbaijan's legislation prohibits foreign citizens and stateless persons from donating to CSOs. Additionally, a number of mechanisms such as "cash boxes" or "crowdfunding" are not envisaged in the legislation. Conversely, the legislation does not define the criteria for "charitable organizations" to enable certain CSOs to operate more effectively.

Since 2017 there have been a series of positive fluctuations in government-civil society relations. As a result, the volume of financial resources allocated to the CSO sector (with some 4,350 registered entities) has increased and a number of positive changes have been made in the tax legislation that will stimulate the activities of CSOs. Regardless, many interviewees noted they operate using informal member contributions and donations collected through fundraising initiatives to keep their operations afloat, and when possible also try to provide some basic support and shelter for female victims of domestic violence. The majority of interviewees explained their group/organization operates on a voluntary basis, without having funding support and full-time staff to implement activities. They also report there is almost no meeting space, printing services, or other material resources available to them free of charge.

Only some of the interviewees indicated they received some funding support from foreign donors and the support was seed-funding. The groups/organizations receiving such funding had some sort of basic statement of goals, vision and mission, organizational structure, activity plan, branding/logo, and communication plan. Notwithstanding, they mostly lacked detailed financial accounting rules and procedures, formal travel and procurement rules, formal position descriptions, and performance management rules.

Data showed that most of the emerging feminist actors have no clear vision and plan for financial stability for their group/organization. Only one interviewee mentioned her plans to diversify

funding sources and consider crowd-sourcing in addition to the ongoing grant provided to her group. Almost all interviewees mentioned constraints imposed by the Government's domestic laws and regulations on donations and foreign funding of CSOs as a financial issue. Some interviews also mentioned the amount of foreign funding opportunities available for feminist activists is limited even though many international organizations have identified GEWE as one of the priority areas.

Interviewees claimed international organizations and embassies in the country usually prefer to work with officially registered and experienced CSOs. One interviewee expanded on this by saying, "Donors are usually looking for registered local NGOs to implement rather big, complicated projects. There are monopolies in the local NGO sector where well established, old NGOs— 'gate-keepers'—control, sometimes prevent new, young activists/players' access to the grant market." Interviewees also noted grant opportunities offered by these donors oftentimes have burdensome application requirements. For example, the application requires a formal reference from an established CSO. However, as one interviewee explained, this discourages "young, passionate, committed but less experienced, informal feminist groups" from applying. This also sets up the CSOs as "monopolists," according to another interviewee. Some of the interviewees also pointed to their lack of grant proposal writing experience and project management knowledge and skills as additional factors negatively affecting their efforts in securing foreign funding support. Additionally, they mentioned negative stereotypes associated with the term "foreign grant-recipients" discourage some of the feminist actors from applying for foreign grants, which then limits their ability to implement much-needed awareness-raising activities in the regions of Azerbaijan.

Almost all interview participants stated they had difficulties with locating information on available funding opportunities and grant calls by foreign donors. They also noted they only get such information through personal contacts and friends. As one participant recommended, "It would be good if the UN and/or other donors can help establish a news platform which would collect, maintain and update information about all the donors and grants available to individuals, groups and NGOs working on gender equality and women's rights."

Cultural and educational context

Society in Azerbaijan is widely conservative and patriarchal views are still strong despite some developments in the protection of women's rights. The level of public awareness about the value and benefits of social diversity, GEWE, LGBTQI rights, prohibition of employment discrimination and workplace harassment, and equal pay and benefits is at a sub-standard level. As described by one of the participants, "There is no public awareness, no adequate literature or publications on these topics, no academic research on local issues pertaining to Azerbaijan, which creates

difficulties for feminists. In addition to this, government agencies are also not knowledgeable enough about gender equality. The official government policies need to be gender-sensitive.”

There are misunderstandings and negative perceptions about feminists and their intentions. Feminists are oftentimes seen as a threat to national values and traditions, and therefore are subjected to harsh criticism and sometimes aggressive treatment. Some interviewees alleged that special interest groups are trying to maintain negative stereotypes about feminists in order to discourage expansion and strengthening of the feminist movement in the country. They also believed traditional media oftentimes plays a role in enhancing negative stereotypes and misconceptions about feminism and gender equality activists. They suggested the level of professionalism of journalists needs to be enhanced to increase gender-sensitivity when reporting on cases of GBV and to promote gender equality. One interview reported that “sometimes even prominent civil society members working on gender issues have made public statements in which they indirectly blame victims of GBV, and reinforce perceptions as if only women who meet certain expectations of the society and comply with the roles and functions imposed on them are entitled to enjoy human rights and freedoms, and receive positive treatment.”

Some of the feminist actors received their education abroad and feel well-prepared and connected, while others have knowledge gaps, poor communication and advocacy skills, and feel isolated which increases their vulnerability to verbal and even physical attacks. One participant also noted “There is little feminist content in the local language, high-quality awareness-raising materials, or literature on feminism and gender issues is almost non-existent. Therefore, we resort to Turkish publications to fill the knowledge gap. We try to bring books from Turkey, which is costly and time-consuming.”

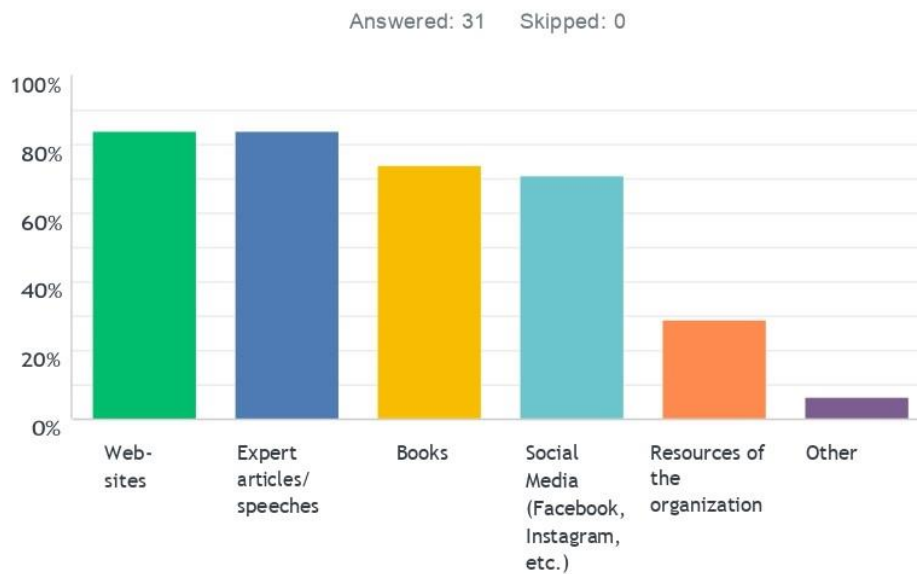
Knowledge gaps, skills development needs, and preferred information sources, tools, and learning methods

Data from the online Questionnaire showed a little over half (55%) of the 31 respondents had taken gender-related training or courses within the past two years, but the remaining respondents (45%) had not taken any gender-related training or courses during this period. Only a little over a third (37%) of the respondents reported they received support (i.e., mentorship, coaching, detailed assignment) from their organization/group for their work on gender, whereas more than third (40%) of them reported they had not received such support and 23% reported this was “not applicable” to them. When asked to identify how familiar they were with the international conventions on GEWE, almost all of them (97%) were familiar with the conventions with 65% reporting they were quite familiar with the conventions, 29% reporting they were very familiar with them, and 3% reporting they used these conventions in their everyday work. A very small percentage (3%) reported they were not at all familiar with such conventions. Finally, the majority (77%) of the respondents indicated they were clear on the differences between gender

mainstreaming and equal representation of women and only 19% acknowledged they were not clear on the difference. The remaining 3% reported this was “not applicable” to them.

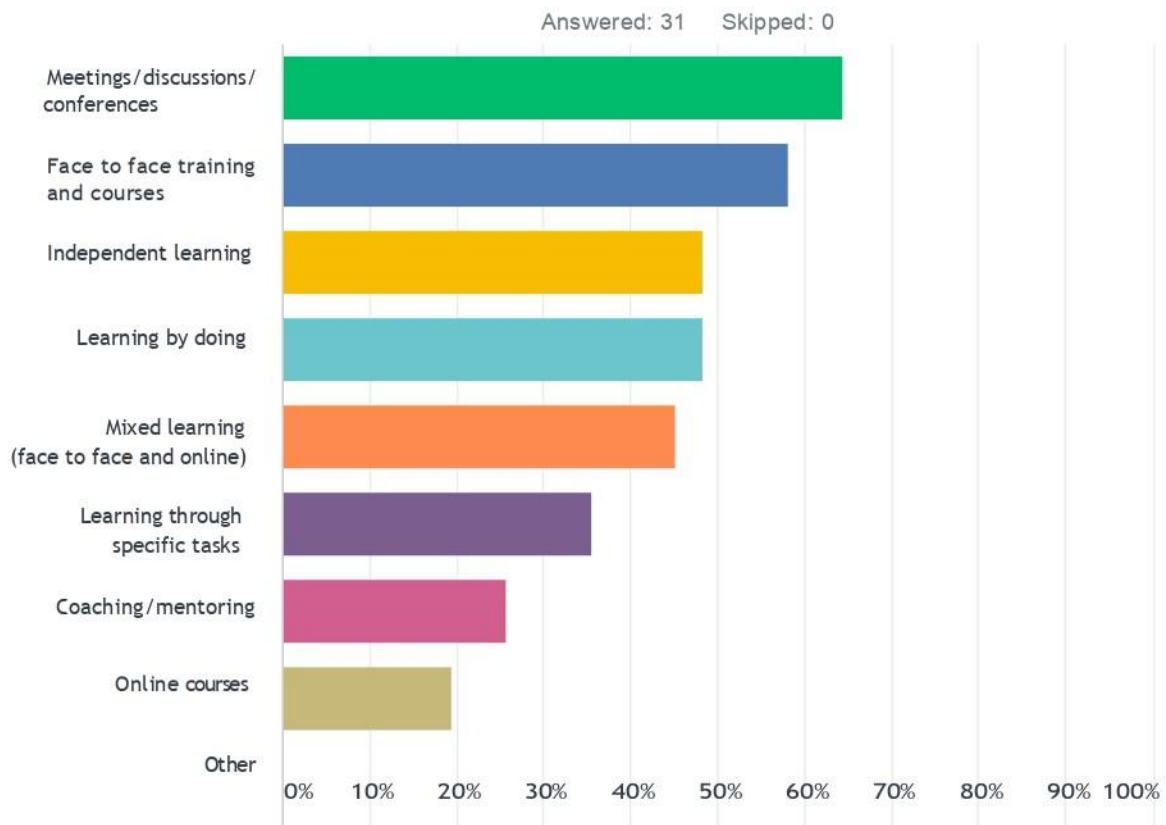
The online Questionnaire showed respondents’ preferred information sources and tools to increase their knowledge about gender equality issues include websites and expert articles/speeches (both ranked at 84%), books (ranked at 74 %), and social media (ranked at 70%). The less preferred but still used information sources and tools include organizational resources (ranked at 29%) and other sources (ranked at 6%). See Figure 1 below.

Q15: Which information sources and tools do you use in order to increase your knowledge about gender equality issues?



Data from the online Questionnaire also revealed the top ways respondents preferred to learn were through meetings/discussions/conferences (65%) and face to face training and courses (58%). Other preferred learning methods included: independent learning (through books, online resources) and learning by doing (both at 48%); mixed learning (face-to-face and online learning) (45%); learning through specific tasks (35%); coaching/mentoring (26%); and online courses (19%). See Figure 2 below.

**Q16: What are the top three ways in which you prefer to learn?
Please select your top three preferences.**



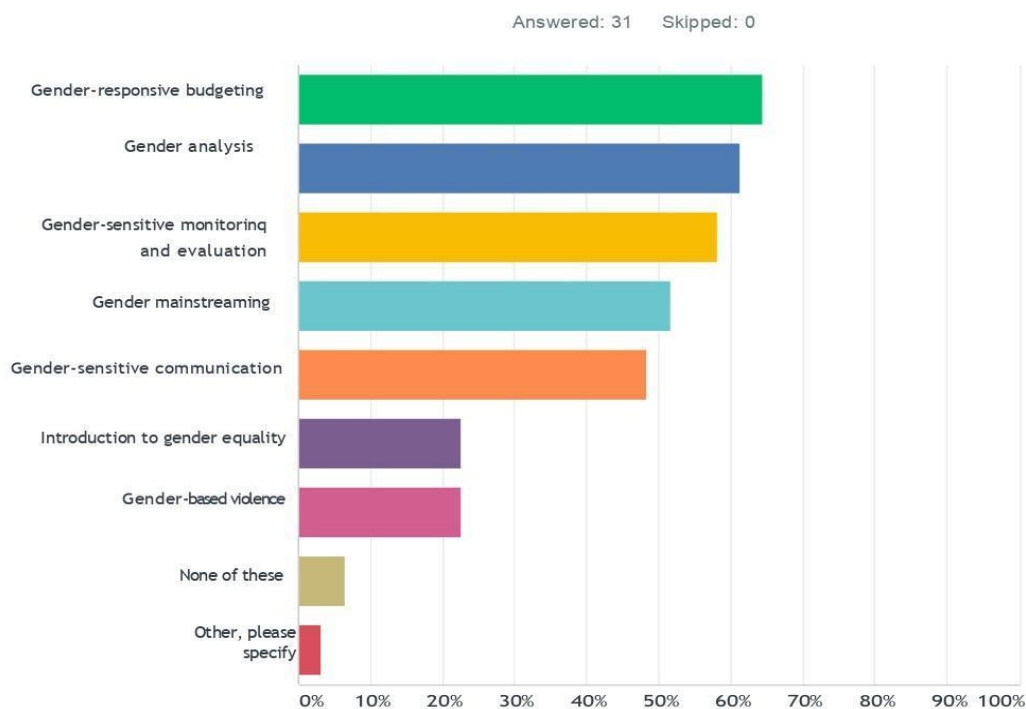
All 22 of the interview participants acknowledged the need for increasing their knowledge of key feminist concepts, theories, strategies, discourse, and best practices, in addition to lessons learned from other countries' movements promoting feminism and GEWE. The main thematic areas of interest for further education they frequently mentioned were as follows:

- gender budgeting tools
- gender mainstreaming
- sex-disaggregated data collection
- GBV
- media-monitoring
- equal opportunities in education
- equal participation in the socio-economic and political life and governance of the state
- prevention and effective investigation of GBV cases
- prosecution of perpetrators
- protection of victims of violence
- gender-responsive pay/benefits policy and practices
- the introduction of parental leave
- LGBTQI rights
- combatting employment discrimination
- SDG 5
- international conventions on GEWE

Several of these areas were also identified in the online Questionnaire as topics respondents would choose for training to further advance their activities, in addition to a few other topics. Those topics included (See Figure 3 below):

- gender-responsive budgeting (ranked 65%)
- gender analysis (ranked 61%)
- gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation (ranked 58%)
- gender mainstreaming (ranked 52%)
- gender-sensitive-communication (ranked 48%)
- introduction to gender equality (ranked 23%)
- GBV (ranked 23%)

Q 14: What topics would you choose for training in order to further advance your activities?
Select all the topics that you need to be trained on.



The interview participants also identified the following skills as the most demanded skills to focus on in potential capacity development interventions:

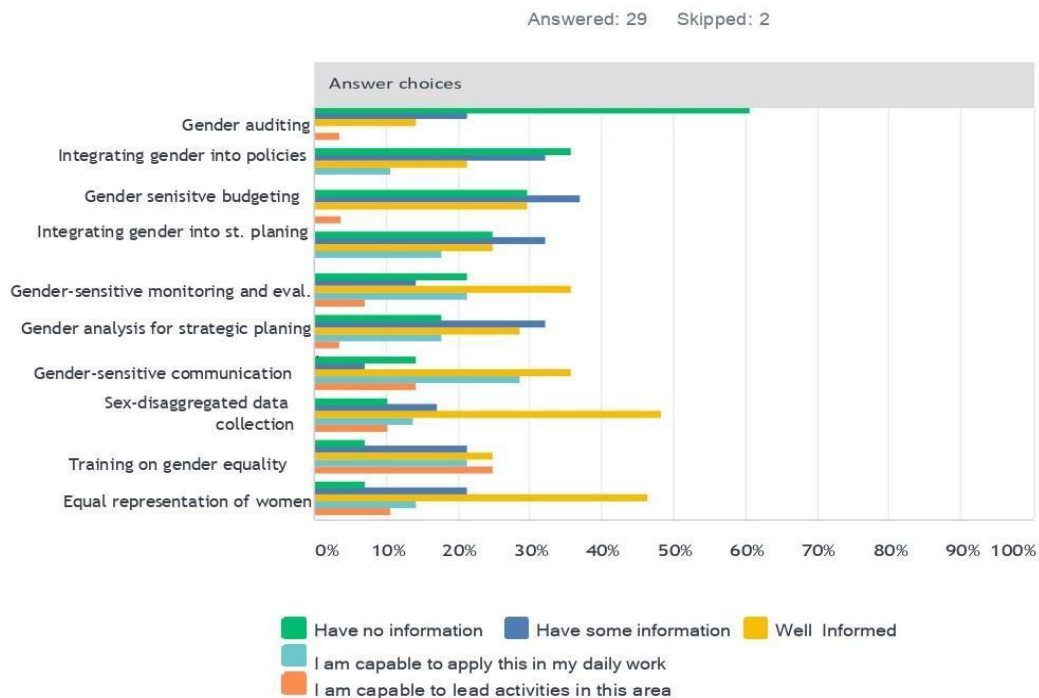
- effective communication
- storytelling
- effective and quality feminist content creation
- podcast production
- skills for effective presentation/sharing of information
- use of new technologies and social media tools
- survey design, data collection, processing, and visualization
- outreach and communication strategy
- effective advocacy and policy reform strategies

Some interviewees also expressed the need for capacity development interventions focused on the development of skills related to project design, management, and monitoring, grant proposal writing, organizational development, and financial sustainability. Data from the online Questionnaire revealed there were five main areas where respondents had no or little information about, thus suggesting these are potential areas for capacity development interventions as well.

Those areas included (See Figure 4 below):

1. gender auditing
2. integrating gender into finance/procurement/IT/Human Resources/management/security policies, administrative instructions, and other directives
3. gender-sensitive budgeting and tracking of resources
4. integrating gender into strategic planning processes including results statements and indicators
5. gender analysis for strategic planning

Q11: Please rate your knowledge and experience in the following areas.



Finally, 58% of the online Questionnaire respondents reported they were aware of the gender policies, strategies, and/or gender focal points or networks in place at their organization/group, but 13% responded they were not aware of them. The remaining 29% reported that these are “not applicable,” but the high level of this response is likely due to respondents acting on their own individual capacity without joining any formal group or organization. The vast majority (97%) of respondents reported they are aware of other feminists, groups, organizations, or networks working

on GEWE in the country. Only 3% of respondents reported they were not aware of such activists or entities.

When it comes to participants' self-reported assessment of their knowledge and skills, there appears to be some discrepancy between their responses to some of the online Questionnaire questions and interview questions. However, it appears the individual interviews provided an informal opportunity and safe (off-the-record) space to have a more open and in-depth discussion of their needs for knowledge and skills development.

Other factors: rise of social media, impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and war in the Nagorno-Karabakh region

New digital technologies such as social networks, automation, and artificial intelligence have created easily accessible opportunities for individuals to create content, establish large-scale digital networks, disseminate information to mass audiences and receive feedback from them, and digitally conduct fundraising activities and webinars. At the same time, these technologies can also inflict a negative impact by facilitating the spread of disinformation, hate speech, and radical extremist ideologies, thus reinforcing discrimination and reducing civil society space.

It has been reported that 75% of the population in Azerbaijan uses the Internet and the number of Facebook users in the country is estimated to far exceed two million, with 64% of the users falling within the age range of 25-44.¹⁶ Given the latest upward trends in the number of social media users, social media is considered to be an effective tool to reach broad population groups. With the introduction of lockdown measures in early 2020 and the prohibition of large public gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the utility of the online social media tools increased even further.

Almost all interviewees mentioned they had to suspend planned activities (i.e., support services, live events, book presentations, art exhibitions, movie nights) and shift to online platforms for awareness-raising activities and webinars due to the pandemic related social-distancing measures, especially during the strict quarantine periods. Some of them also spoke about having faced additional personal challenges during the pandemic such as unemployment, financial difficulties, physical health issues, psychological distress, and depression, which also hindered their ability to

¹⁶ Article: Azərbaycanca internet istifadəçilərinin statistikası araşdırılıb. Retrieved from home page REPORT.AZ <https://report.az/ikt/azerbaycanda-internet-istifadecilerinin-statistikasi-arasdirilib/> on November 10, 2020

Article: Azərbaycanca “Facebook” istifadəçilərinin sayı artıb. Retrieved from home page Modern.az <https://modern.az/az/news/267554/azerbaycanda-facebook-istifadecilerinin-sayi-artib> on December 2, 2020

Data on Facebook users in Azerbaijan. Retrieved from home page NapoleonCat <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-azerbaijan/2020/01> on November 10, 2020.

work and deliver support for the female victims of violence and gender-based discrimination during the critical times when support services were most needed.

The rise of online social media tools had advantages and disadvantages for interviewees who continued their GEWE work during the pandemic. They explained social media (Facebook, YouTube, and other tools) provides a quick, easy, and useful platform for sharing feminist content, reaching out to young people, networking, mobilizing resources and fund-raising, and having online discussions and receiving feedback. Conversely, they noted the algorithms used by some social media tools limited the outreach to a “bubble”- a circle of like-minded people sharing similar interests, reinforcing similar messages. Therefore, online activities were seen as not as effective as live events and outreach activities which tend to attract people of diverse backgrounds and age ranges. Interviewees also reflected on the negative aspect of social media, with one participant describing it as “an evil, though useful sometimes, [and it] can be malicious as well” because it provides an easy tool for defaming activists and spreading negative propaganda and hate-speech about feminists. Finally, interviewees highlighted that residents in remote rural regions in Azerbaijan, and oftentimes socio-economically vulnerable women in the country, do not have necessary devices (e.g., mobile phones, personal computers) and a stable Internet connection to benefit from these online resources.

As of September 27, 2020, the already challenging situation was further exacerbated by the war between the military forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The war dominated the public agenda in the country and led to an increase in nationalistic, militarist, and patriarchal rhetoric, in addition to reinforcing conservative views in the society and resistance to feminist ideas. Interviewees explained that during the decades of frozen conflict about Nagorno-Karabakh leading up to 2020, the feminist agenda had already been deemed not a matter of priority by many in the society. As one participant explained, gender equality was referred to as something “not so important given the more pressing national security issues and problems of hundreds of thousands of IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons].” Such views became more and more prominent and vocalized during the recent full-fledged military operations, thus significantly diminishing the feminist actors’ hopes for making themselves heard. Interviewees noted that some feminists who publicly condemned the war on social media reportedly became subject to criticism, aggression, verbal attacks and, even in a couple of cases, threats of violence.

During the interviews, several participants shared that they believed GBV against women was likely to further increase in the country as a result of traumatic events experienced by military personnel during the wartime and associated issues such as depression, personality disorders, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. However, while acknowledging the war had impeded their activities, one interviewee also made a positive remark about it and noted the challenges of the war may nevertheless be transformed into opportunities for supporting women within families negatively affected by the war.

Opportunities: How should GEWE be communicated and promoted in Azerbaijan?

The approaches to effective communication with society at large about GEWE are somewhat different among the interviewed feminist actors. While some of them are seeking gradual changes in public perceptions and discriminatory policies and practices, others are aiming for rapid changes and prefer to deliver brave and bold messages. One interviewee described this as “shock therapy.” Nevertheless, all of the interview participants emphasized the strong need for reaching out to residents in the outskirts of Baku and regions of the country and working with government authorities to increase societal understanding of concepts about feminism and GEWE. They suggested local media outlets need to be engaged in these efforts- after preferably having been trained on how to report professionally, how to identify and avoid gender-biased and sexist statements, and how to raise awareness about GEWE.

A number of interviewees also noted that communication with the public about the feminist agenda needs to be tailored to the needs and priorities of the target audience. They also emphasized the communication should be culturally sensitive and adjusted to the specific context in order to not trigger too much irritation and public outrage, as this would result in them being forced to suspend and/or terminate their activities. As one interviewee explained, “When raising awareness about women’s rights, in public communications we need a different, positive approach, as using the image of a ‘suppressed, beaten up woman’ has become outdated. We need inspiring success stories of women who managed to overcome challenges. Media outlets need to be trained on professional reporting, public awareness-raising, effective and professional communication.” These interviewees believed that effective communication with society at large about GEWE would be possible if reputable representatives, leaders of the community, distinguished public figures, and celebrities were engaged in the communication and promotion. This is especially important as one participant noted “Prominent celebrities, those in the social media and entertainment sector, social influencers are not being engaged in the promotion of gender equality.”

Furthermore, it was mentioned there is a need for more sophisticated discussions with academia and local and international experts on the theoretical and practical aspects of feminism, feminist and women’s rights movements in Azerbaijan and other countries. It was highlighted by several interviewees that efforts aimed at communication and promotion of GEWE in Azerbaijan would be more effective if the society would receive unified, consistent, context-sensitive, and progressive messages from a number of actors, which includes relevant public authorities, civil society, influential public figures, media, academia, and other stakeholders.

Recommendations¹⁷

The following are measures or actions proposed by the Assessment team to address needs and strengthen the local capacity of emerging feminist actors (e.g., activists who identify as feminists and work on GEWE either individually, in a group, or with an organization) as well as local authorities to advance GEWE in Azerbaijan. As envisioned in the EU's strategy documents on human rights and gender equality, the EU can use its policies and tools (i.e., public diplomacy, communication campaigns, statements and declarations, conferences and other events, dialogue with civil society, other non-state actors, and the business sector, thematic and geographical financial instruments, relevant programmes and projects, multilateral and regional engagement, political dialogues, and regular human rights dialogues) as a leverage to promote women's rights and GEWE.

1. General Recommendations:

1.1 Addressing gender-based discrimination and protection of women and girls

- Support efforts aiming to combat discrimination on grounds of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and continue calling on the government of Azerbaijan to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and GEWE.
- Support initiatives enabling joint efforts between government authorities and civil society representatives (which includes feminist actors and CSOs).
- Support implementation of the progressive measures envisaged in the National Action Plan on Combating Domestic Violence 2020-2023. Advocate for the elimination, prevention, and protection from sexual violence, GBV, and discrimination, as well as harmful norms and practices such as early and forced marriage and selective abortions.
- Encourage and support efforts promoting the ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).
- Support actions aiming to prevent and combat all forms of discrimination against LGBTIQI persons, including LGBTIQI-phobic violence and hate speech.

1.2. Expanding civic and political space for GEWE dialogue

- Support initiatives that promote a safe and enabling operational environment for civil society actors and feminist actors to promote freedom of expression, media freedom (online and offline), and the freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- Support initiatives on reforming and simplifying Azerbaijan's legal and regulatory framework for CSO registration, grant registration, provision of foreign funding, and

¹⁷ The sequence of the recommendations listed above should not be viewed as an order placed in accordance with their importance.

making donations.

- Support creation of safe and free spaces for feminist actors and GEWE advocates to assemble and conduct public debates and dialogue about the most pressing challenges and opportunities for cooperation on the prevention of discrimination and the advancement of GEWE. Use existing spaces/platforms where possible (e.g., Regional Women’s Resource Centers established by cooperation between the United Nations Development Programme, the United States Agency for International Development, the State Committee for Family, Women and, Children Issues, and local authorities).
- Engage and support the participation of feminist actors and GEWE advocates in civil society forums on GEWE (i.e., online conferences, webinars) at the country, regional, and global level.
- Support shaping a shared gender agenda between the CSOs and the government of Azerbaijan and advocate for adaptation and implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality (pending approval).
- Support training of traditional and new media representatives and journalists on professional and gender-responsive news reporting, promote efforts to counter disinformation, misogyny, and hate speech, and prevent reinforcement of negative gender stereotypes in the media.
- Promote civic education on GEWE via distance learning, online media tools, through the translation of textbooks, policies, and guidelines on best-practices. Use art (i.e., movies, art exhibitions) and essay competitions to facilitate public debate on GEWE.
- Support initiatives that identify and further promote good human stories. For example, stories about successful women who managed to fight gender-based discrimination and violence and made progress in the political, economic, scientific, and cultural life of the country and harness their stories for promoting further positive women’s rights changes.

2. Specific Recommendations:

2.1. Strengthening organizational/institutional capacity of the feminist actors

- Support opportunities for building and developing organizational/institutional capacity for feminist actors.
- Provide capacity building development (i.e., online trainings, discussions) for gender focal points and other stakeholders to advance their knowledge and experience of feminist concepts and movements and to deepen their knowledge of international mechanisms, policies, and best practices on ensuring GEWE.
- Translate GEWE materials into the local language and publicize them to raise awareness of gender equality standards and best practices in combatting gender-based discrimination and violence.
- Support feminist actors with technical assistance and consultancy on the following areas: gender-responsive organizational/institutional policy documents and procedures; gender-

responsive vision and mission statements, strategic plans, communication plan, and branding/marketing rules; internal policies and operational procedures (i.e., travel and procurement procedures); staff salary and benefits policies, position descriptions, and performance assessment procedures; financial procedures, reporting procedures, and audits; supervision, monitoring, and evaluation plan, gender-responsive budgeting, sex-disaggregated data collection, and analysis.

- Support training on the integration of gender into the strategic planning processes including results statements and indicators, gender-responsive planning (e.g. development of project or programme documents), and gender-sensitive communications (i.e., images, publications, language).

2.2. Financial and organizational sustainability

- Offer flexible and simplified financial instruments to provide funding support for grassroots activities on feminism and GEWE.
- Provide training on best practices in ensuring institutional financial sustainability and diversifying funding sources (i.e., fund-raising, crowd-sourced funding, collection and transparent management of membership fees, and donations).
- Support the creation and maintenance of a free online platform (i.e., an easily accessible, user-friendly, regularly updated online database) on funding opportunities, grants, study scholarships, and distance-learning tools to increase feminist actors' and civil society members' access to information to available financial resources and educational tools.

2.3 Development of technical knowledge and skills

- Support trainings, webinars, and online courses with the use of new information technologies on the following topics:
 - Gender mainstreaming: gender auditing; gender-responsive budgeting and resource tracking; gender-sensitive communication; gender-sensitive monitoring and assessment; integration of gender into policies, administrative instructions, and other directives on finance/procurement/IT/Human Resources/management services/security; integration of gender into strategic planning processes including results statements and indicators; gender analysis for strategic planning.
 - Feminist concepts, theories, strategies, and best practices and lessons learned from other countries feminist and gender equality movements.
 - Equal opportunities in education, equal participation in the socio-economic, political life, and governance of the state; prevention and effective investigation of GBV cases, prosecution of perpetrators, protection of victims of violence; prevention of workplace sexual harassment against women; gender-responsive pay/benefits policy and practices, the introduction of parental leave, LGBTQI rights, combatting employment discrimination, SDG 5, international conventions on GEWE, gender budgeting tools, sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis, GBV. and media-

monitoring.

- Support skills development activities in the following areas:
 - Effective communication and public outreach, project design, management, and monitoring skills, grant proposal writing skills, survey design, data collection, processing, and visualization skills, effective use of new technologies and social media, storytelling, skills for effective presentation/sharing of information, effective feminist content creation, podcast production, effective advocacy, and policy reform strategies.

2.4. Strengthening formal education and academic research on GEWE

- Foster post-graduate academic research on GEWE issues in Azerbaijan. Support action to assist higher education institutions, as well as their capacity to provide online and distance learning on GEWE.
- Support integration of GEWE issues into the high school curriculum and development of textbooks for elementary and high-school school children on GEWE.

2.5. Mobilization of the feminist actors

- Develop a network of partners, including partnerships through selective issues-based engagement. Reach out to new partners, make sure to engage less formal, more flexible, newly emerging GEWE advocates, civic activists, groups and initiatives as well.
- Explore ways to improve engagement between different stakeholders, promote regular dialogues on GEWE between state actors, businesses, civil society (including social partners), and the international community.
- Support and strengthen long-term partnerships with feminist and women rights activists/groups/movements.
- Support creation of a platform for sharing information and coordination of assistance efforts/activities/projects to obtain up-to-date information on local and international stakeholders, and avoid duplication of efforts in the areas of promotion of GEWE and fighting GBV.

2.6. Application of the new technologies for advancement of GEWE agenda

- Support capacity development trainings on the use of new technologies, online social media, and artificial intelligence in developing quality content (i.e., podcasts, video materials, social advertisements, short movies) on feminism and GEWE.
- Encourage and support innovation using the latest communication and information technology to develop tools and platforms to offer easily accessible, affordable, and safe spaces for discussion on GEWE.

Appendix 1. Relevant Resources

1. Chart of signatures and ratifications of the European Convention on Human Rights (1950). https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/005/signatures?p_auth=s9uNDfa4
2. Chart of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2011). https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures?p_auth=Izac86ea
3. Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan (1995). <https://en.president.az/azerbaijan/constitution> (in English)
4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>
5. Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2000). <http://www.e-qanun.az/code/11> (in Azerbaijani)
6. EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for 2020-2024 (25.03.2020). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:e9112a36-6e95-11ea-b735-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_3&format=PDF
7. EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Relations 2020–2025 (GAP III), (25.11.2020). https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf
8. EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (05.03.2020). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>
9. Fourth Periodic Report of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 2008. <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/AdvanceVersions/CEDAW-C-AZE-4.pdf>
10. Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Tool (2014). UN Women Training Centre. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2014/6/gender-equality-capacity-assessment-tool>
11. Article: Azərbaycanca internet istifadəçilərinin statistikasını araşdırılıb. REPORT.AZ (10.11.2020) <https://report.az/ikt/azerbaycanda-internet-istifadecilerinin-statistikasi-arasdirilib/>
12. Article: Azərbaycanca “Facebook” istifadəçilərinin sayı artıb. Modern.az (02.12.2020) <https://modern.az/az/news/267554/azerbaycanda-facebook-istifadecilerinin-sayi-artib>

13. Data on Facebook users in Azerbaijan. NapoleonCat (10.11.2020)
<https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-azerbaijan/2020/01>
14. Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (1999). <http://www.e-qanun.az/code/7> (in Azerbaijani).
15. Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2006). https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/--ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_127414.pdf (in English)
16. Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (2010).
<http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/20131> (in Azerbaijani).
17. Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1999.
<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/protocol/text.htm>
18. Presidential Order approving the National Action Plan for Combating Domestic Violence in Azerbaijan for 2020-2023 (dated 27 November 2020).
<https://president.az/articles/47971>
19. Rules of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the operations of the support centers for victims of domestic violence” and “On the accreditation of non-state support centers for victims of domestic violence” (25 April 2012). <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/23457>
20. Rules of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On handling referrals of cases of domestic violence where the acts are not regarded as of a criminal nature” (24 February 2012). <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/23241>
21. Rules of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the organization and operationalization of the database on domestic violence” (19 December 2011).
<http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/22719>
22. Rules of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On guiding the organization of the prophylactic registry of the persons committing domestic violence and correctional-preventive work with them” (19 December 2011). <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/22718>
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Appendix 2. Online Questionnaire

Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Questionnaire

Dear respondent,

Thanks so much for taking the time to complete the Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Survey. Questionnaire responses are anonymous and confidential and will gather important information to take stock of individual capacity related to gender equality and the empowerment of women within the organization. Your responses will provide very useful information which will be used to determine future training activities. The information gathered through this survey will only be used for this purpose. We thank you for responding honestly and in the most complete way possible.

You will have an opportunity to include your comments and suggestions at the end of the questionnaire but you can also send comments to us later on at Khalisa.shahverdiyeva@gmail.com.

Section 1: General information

1. Please, fill in the following table.

Organization/Group/individual name	
Area of focus	
Contacts (email, phone)	
Social media (web-page, blog, fb, twitter)	
Organization is registered?	
Age of respondent	
Sex of respondent	

Section 2: Educational background and previous experiences in training for gender equality

2. Highest educational level completed, please specify year, area or topic:

Educational level	Year	Topic
Secondary school		
Bachelor/undergraduate		
Master		
PhD		
Other, please specify: _____		

3. Have you taken gender-related training or courses in the last two years? Are you taking any courses on gender now? Please, include trainings where gender was included but not the main topic of the training.

Yes

No

Not applicable

4. If yes, please, include information of the trainings taken.

Course name	Topic	Date/Duration	Type of training (face to face, online, etc.)	Organized/ Provided by	Are you satisfied with the course/ training?
					Yes/No

5. Information of the trainings taken on gender equality (continued).

Course name	Topic	Date/Duration	Type of training (face to face, online, etc.)	Organized/ Provided by	Are you satisfied with the course/ training?
					Yes/No

6. Information of the trainings taken on gender equality (continued)

Course name	Topic	Date/Du ration	Type of training (face to face, online, etc.)	Organized/ Provided by	Are you satisfied with the course/ training?
					Yes/No

7. Have you received support from your organization/group for your work on gender (mentoring, coaching, detailed assignment, etc.)?

___ Yes, please, specify: _____

___ No

___ Not applicable

Section 3: Knowledge of gender equality and women’s empowerment

8. To what extent do gender issues reflect in your professional activities?

Not at all	
To a limited extent	
To a significant extent	
The whole focus is on gender	
Not applicable	

9. How familiar are you with international conventions on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women?

Not at all familiar	
Quite familiar	
Very familiar	
I use these in my everyday work	
Not applicable	

10. Are you clear about the difference between gender mainstreaming and equal representation of women?

Yes

No

Not applicable

11. For the following skills and processes, please indicate your level of knowledge and proficiency by ticking the appropriate box.

Processes	N/A	I don't know about this	I know about this	I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work	I am confident enough to lead work on this
Gender analysis for strategic planning					
Collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data					
Integration of gender into strategic planning processes including results statements and indicators					
Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation					
Gender-responsive budgeting and tracking of resources					
Gender-responsive planning (e.g. development of project or programme documents)					
Gender-specific programming (e.g. inclusion of gender in planning documents such as country programme reports)					

Processes	N/A	I don't know about this	I know about this	I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work	I am confident enough to lead work on this
Training/capacity development for gender equality					
Gender-responsive audit					
Gender-sensitive communications (images, publications, language)					
Inclusion of gender into policies, administrative instructions and other directives on finance/ procurement/IT/Human Resources/management services/security					
Policies and plans for the equal representation of women					
Others. Please, specify:					
Not applicable					

12. Are you aware of any gender policies, strategies, and/or gender focal points or networks in place in your organization/group?

Yes, please, specify which ones: _____

No

Not applicable

13. Are you aware of any other feminist/women's empowerment organizations and gender related networks in Azerbaijan?

Yes, please, specify which ones: _____

No

Not applicable

Section 4: Learning styles and needs

14. Which trainings on gender equality would you like to take or receive to improve your work? Select (tick) as many options as needed.

- Introduction to Gender Equality
- Gender Mainstreaming
- Gender Analysis
- Gender-Responsive Budgeting
- Gender-responsive Monitoring and Evaluation
- Gender-responsive Communication
- Gender -based Violence
- None
- Other, please, specify which ones: _____

15. What tools and/or sources of information do you use to support your knowledge of and/or the inclusion of gender equality issues in your work (specific department on gender equality, gender focal point, the organization’s website, the organization’s publications, etc.)?

Websites	
Expert articles / speeches	
Books	
Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)	
Organizational resources	
Organizational resources	
Other, please explain: _____	

16. What are the top three ways in which you prefer to learn? Please select your top three options:

Ways of learning	
Face to face training and courses	
Face to face workshops	
Self-paced online courses	
Moderated online courses with a tutor	
Blended trainings (online moderated with a tutor and face to face workshops)	
Detailed assignments	
Coaching	
On the job/learning by doing with follow up by specialist	
Conferences	
Other, please explain: _____	

17. Please share any thoughts or comments that you think might be useful.

Thanks again for your collaboration. You will have access to the consolidated results very soon!

Appendix 3. Interview Questions

Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Semi-structured interviews

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

#	Main questions	Notes
1	Do you identify yourself as a feminist activist? Does your group/organization identify itself as a feminist group/organization?	
2	Has your organization been registered, how many members do you have?	
3	Does your organization/group have the following: goals, vision and mission statement, strategic plan, communication plan, branding/marketing rules; organizational structure, description of functions/roles, description of responsibilities; internal policies and operational procedures (travel, procurement procedures); staff salary benefits policy, position descriptions, performance assessment procedures; financial systems/procedures, control mechanisms, reporting procedures, audits; activity reporting rules; supervision, monitoring evaluation plan, quality assurance/evaluation procedures, etc.	

4	What financial resources are available for the feminist activists and women's rights groups/organizations?	
5	What are the main challenges for advancing gender equality and women's rights in Azerbaijan?	
6	What are specific gaps in knowledge, skills, and organizational capacities needed for the advancement of this agenda?	
7	How gender equality should be communicated and promoted in Azerbaijan?	
8	Are the feminist activists and women's rights groups/organizations well organized/coordinated in Azerbaijan?	
9	If not, what would incentivize them to join efforts and employ a coherent approach to the issue?	
10	How does the rise of social media impact the work of the feminist activists and women's rights groups/organizations?	
11	How does the covid-19 pandemic impact the work of the feminist activists and women's rights groups/organizations?	
12	How does the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict impact the work of feminist activists and women's rights groups/organizations?	